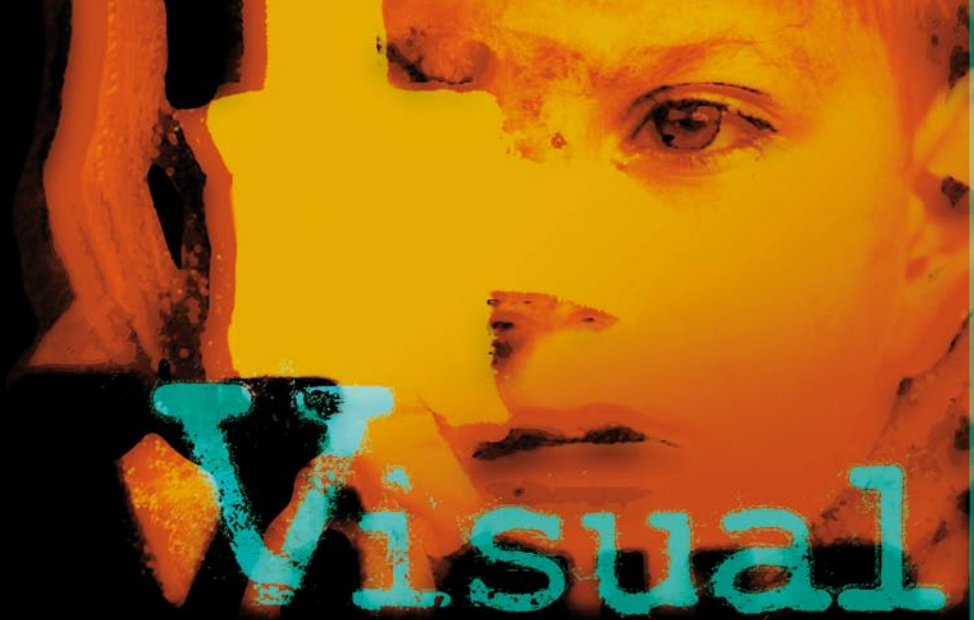

# Visual Representations of Iran

## Conference, Film season, Photographic exhibition

Presented by the Department of Social Anthropology,
the Institute for Iranian Studies,
the Centre for Film Studies of the University of St. Andrews
and the Iran Heritage Foundation

**University of St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland**

**13-16 June 2008**

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Visual Representations of Iran

**Presented by**

***The Iran Heritage Foundation*** and ***The Department of Social Anthropology of the University of St Andrews***

**Organisors**
The Department of Social Anthropology, the Institute for Iranian Studies and the Centre for Film Studies of the University of St Andrews.

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# Introduction



Over seventy years after the inception of anthropology in Iran, visual anthropology remains one of the least known fields among the anthropologists, documentary film makers, photographers, and image creators working on this country, notwithstanding the fact that post-revolutionary Iran is both externally and internally conceived largely through images in the form of films, photographs, mural paintings, posters, graphic designs and multimedia.

In particular, the production of documentary films in Iran has enjoyed a considerable development during the past two decades, not solely by governmental organisations but also by independent film makers (both Iranian and non-Iranian), despite the absence of any significant debate regarding theory in relation to visual anthropology and visual culture or to moving images as a system of meaning.

At present insufficient communication between anthropological institutes, anthropologists, documentary film organisations and independent documentary film makers can be considered to lie at the root of this lack of clear meaning for visual anthropology in Iran.

Although the field of visual anthropology may hitherto not have attracted the level of attention it merits, it is evident that study and analysis of contemporary Iran and Iranian society through its visual culture and its pictorial media, from an anthropological perspective, is of great value in that it is conducive to bringing into effect a new scope of vision and insights into Iran and Iranians today.

The conception of such a programme on the Visual Anthropology of Iran in the U.K. originated in 2007 through my personal communications with Mr F Hakimzadeh of the Iran Heritage Foundation in London. With his full support, we organised our first programme in this regard: "Narration of Triumph: War in the Documentary Cinema of Post-Revolutionary Iran" in February 2007, which was held at the Barbican Centre in London.

Later, in September 2007, for the first time in the history of Iranian Studies in the UK, the Iran Heritage Foundation, along with the Centro Incontri Umani in Switzerland, established a three-year position in the Anthropology of Iran at the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of St Andrews. After being appointed to this post-doctoral position, I began, with the full support of the Iran Heritage Foundation and of the then Head of the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of St Andrews, Prof Roy Dilley, to organise this present programme concerning "Visual Representations of Iran".

The "Visual Representations of Iran" programme includes three main sections: a conference, a film season and a photographic exhibition of the works of K Golestan regarding the Iranian revolution and war.

Incorporating both Iranian and non-Iranian visualisations, the goal of our conference is to explore anthropologically the wide range of visual representations of Iran. This does not exclude, of course, the particular genre of ethnographic documentary, but rather the aim is to incorporate it as an object of analysis within a wider understanding of visual anthropology.

The conference gathers together anthropologists, film makers, image and media analysts and academics from Iran, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and the U.K. who are interested in the different cultural, historical, social and political aspects of visual representations of Iran. The conference aims to bring these experts into an interdisciplinary dialogue and employ multidisciplinary research methods to interpret and theorise visual aspects of Iran.

I should here express my gratitude to the three keynote speakers of the conference, Prof H Naficy, Prof P I Crawford and Dr R Husmann, who accepted my invitation to participate in our conference programme.

In the conference programme, besides the presentation of thirty-four papers, we will carefully study ten anthropological and documentary films (in the presence of their film makers) as anthropological field notebooks to discover more about the relationship between being a filmmaker and being a visual anthropologist in the field.

In our film season, for the first time outside Iran we will present 42 documentary films (around 30 hours) with a special interest in anthropological and social contexts. We have classified our film season into the following sections: ritual and ceremonies; sport, gender and sex; war-martyrdom and trauma; visual and popular art; and Iranian daily life.

One of the important aspects of our film season is the presence of more than seven independent documentary filmmakers from Iran, along with more than seven anthropologists and non-Iranian filmmakers who have also made films about Iran. It is our intention to thus create an interdisciplinary debate between these two groups to find out more about their ways of creating anthropological and social images concerning Iran.

In our photographic exhibition we present K Golestan's photos regarding the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. Kaveh Golestan was a photojournalist in Iran from before the revolution until his death in 2003. This retrospective exhibition of his stark black and white photography covers the period from 1975 to the late 1990s, beginning with his iconic social realism of Tehran's disenfranchised.

It is our belief that "Visual Representations of Iran" constitutes a valuable programme for beginning an academic debate on the visual anthropology of Iran, and we hope to maintain this dialogue during the years to come by organising similar programmes and running a series of academic publications.

Mostly financed and supported by the Iran Heritage Foundation, the School of Philosophical, Anthropological and Film Studies, and the Institute for Iranian Studies in the University of St Andrews in the U.K., and the Iranian Documentary Filmmakers Society within Iran, the "Visual Representations of Iran" programme could not have been carried out without the extra financial support of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Parsa Community Foundation and the Houtan Foundation in the U.S.A, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Iran Society and I.B. Tauris in the U.K., and Centro Incontri Umani in Switzerland.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my colleagues Prof P J Clark, Prof R Dilley, Prof C Toren, Prof A Ansari, Mr M Arrowsmith, Ms S Montano, Ms Lisa Smith, and Ms M Aitkenhead in the University of St-Andrews and Ms M Honarian from Documentary Filmmakers Society in Iran for all of their help and support. Special thanks go to Ms H Golestan for all of her assistance in helping us to run the photographic exhibition of K Golestan's work.

Dr P Khosronejad
Prof R Dilley

Dept of Social Anthropology
University of St Andrews

St Andrews June 2008

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Visual Representations of Iran

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Visual Representations of Iran

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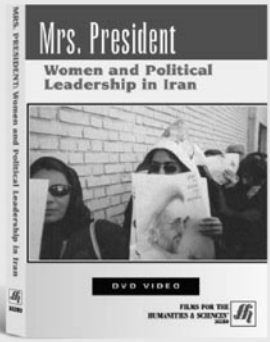

In the summer of 2001, 47 Iranian women neither affiliated with nor supported by any political party registered themselves as candidates for the presidential elections. Due to the Guardian Council's interpretation of a clause in the constitution, none of the women were allowed to run. This documentary presents the thoughts and opinions of six female candidates who agreed to be interviewed, along with the commentary of two female Iranian journalists who cover political developments for magazines in their country. They discuss their efforts in trying to change both governmental and popular opinion regarding the role of women in Iranian politics and society. Produced by Shahla Haeri, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Director of Boston University's Women's Studies Program. (47 minutes) © 2002.

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# ABSTRACTS

## Michael Abecassis

### War Iranian Cinema: Between Reality and Fiction

The fascination for the Western world with Iranian cinema lies primarily with the fable-like developments of its stories which often plunge us into a world of exoticism and lured us with its singularity. Iranian war cinema born during the war between Iran and Irak is not as well distributed in Europe and films with English subtitles are difficult to get hold of. Whether it is interpreted as an anthropological document which opens a dialogue between the protagonist and the spectators, the 'I' and the other, Iranian war cinema by Tabrizi, Sinayi, Hatamikia and Ghobadi, among many others, can be seen as a spiritual voyage where the soul hovers between absence and presence. In the wake of war cinema, in general, one can draw parallels with mythology, Judeo-Christian tradition, literature and art. Its function is not only didactic but cathartic, and the particularity of Iranian war cinema like no other is that it participates into the mourning process of a whole nation fighting against its own ghosts and in search of its identity. The purpose of this presentation will be to attempt in deciphering the myths hidden behind the images presented by Iranian war cinema, paradoxically interweaving the traumatic with the aesthetic.

## Asal Bagheri

### Red Ribbon: taboos and implicit relations between men and women

This work is a semiological analysis of *Red ribbon* (1998), a film by *Ebrahim Hatamikia*. Our starting hypothesis will consist in showing how the director managed to avoid censorship and taboos while describing love relations and how the war and after war conditions can become love instruments in our imagination. The methodology we have adopted is a semiological model proposed by *Anne-Marie Houdebine* named "indices semoilogy". This semiotic is based on flexible structuring and indefinite objects. Our analysis is a 2-step one: the first one is the "systemic analysis" which consists in looking for a structure. We will isolate all the sequences involving any kind of relation between a woman and a man. We will then compare them to determine what are the similarities and the differences in order to get a relevant corpus. After a formal lecture, the second step will consist in analyzing the content. This part concentrates on meaning's

effects and significations processes. The Interpretation of the corpus elements is done at the internal level of our Object and also at the external level when cultural, social, encyclopedical and historical references are mobilized to analyze the meaning. Showing that in this film there's acoding and a hidden language allow us to reveal the methods put in place by many Iranian directors to show what can not be shown in the Iranian post-revolution Islamic cinema.

## Narges Bajoghli

### *The Outcasts:* Reforming the Internal "Other" by Returning to the Ideals of the Revolution

Following its 2007 release, the war comedy *The Outcasts* (*Ekhrajiha*) became the highest grossing film in Iranian cinematic history. Directed by Masoud Dehnamaki, the former General Commander of *Ansar-e Hezbollah*, the film positions the Iran-Iraq war as the idyllic moment when the values of the Revolution were most evidently alive and where the "Majid's" were reformed, in both spirit and body, by sacrificing themselves in the minefields. Through a socio-semiotic analysis of *The Outcasts*, I will point to the ways in which the film collapses temporal and generational boundaries in representing the Iran-Iraq War for the particular political purpose of "returning to the ideals of the Revolution," and reforming members of today's younger generation who have gone "astray" from these ideals. Given the personal history of the director and the timing of the film, nearly twenty years since the end of the war, *The Outcasts* points to the wider debate in Iran today among the supporters of the Revolution: namely, how to instill the revolutionary values in the younger generation. Thus, implicit throughout the film, and explicit in Dehnamaki's interviews about it, is the theme of reforming "the other" within society and teaching him/her the "right" Islamic (revolutionary) values. The war is brought back in *The Outcasts* not solely to remember that time, but to register the essential moment of the Sacred Defense and to consciously re-work it for political and social purposes. The film's setting revolves around an idyllic chronotope in which the mixing of songs from different time periods since the 1979 Revolution (war songs, pop music from L.A., the appropriation of opposition protest songs such as "*Yare Dabestanie Man*") allows "time and space [to] stand in a unique relationship, such that a unity of place makes possible a cyclical blurring of temporal and generational boundaries" (Goodman 2005).

## William O. Beeman

### Visual Representation and Cultural Truth in Iranian Traditional Theatre—*Ta'ziyeh* and *Ru-hozi*

The two dominant traditional theatre forms of Iran, *Ta'ziyeh* and *Ru-hozi* are complementary in their visual imagery. Both forms are highly stylized in their representation of time, place, social hierarchy and conventionalized gender representation. Both deal with dominant cultural themes in Iranian life, and both rely on a strong interactional tie with their audience. The methods of visual representation for these dimensions differ contrastively between the two forms. *Ta'ziyeh* uses color differentiation and spatial conventions to indicate affinities between identifiable groups in conflict in specific locations. *Ru-hozi* is both timeless and indeterminate in location, but relies on stock roles not tied to individual personages. In both cases, however, the dramatic representations present truths that are universal to their respective audiences. The visual cues provided in the representations help guide the viewers in the cultural stance they are presumed to take with regard to the performances.

## Ali Behdad

### Contact Visions: On Photography and Modernity in Iran

In this talk, I will be focusing on two photographers whose works and lives were products of actual contacts between cultures, nations, and people not surprisingly, the photographic archives they produced actually came into contact with each other, creating what I wish to describe as a contact vision of Iran during the second half of nineteenth century. These are Antoin Sevruguin, a European photographer of Georgian origin resident in Iran during the late nineteenth century, and Nasir-al-Din Shah, the Qajar monarch who, as the first serious photographer of Iran, almost single-handedly developed the art and technology of photography in Iran soon after its introduction in Europe. These photographers are products of contact zones and their photographic vision, I want to show, is marked by the effects of colonial contact between the West and the East.

## Neda Bolourchi

### Visual Imagery, Self Expression, and the Formation of a New Iranian Identity

As the machinations being mobilized to launch a war against Iran have intensified, Iranians generated a new type of artistic response through the low-grade but mass reach arena of YouTube. In some fashion parallel to the massive staging of sacred symbolics that occurred during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, the selected videos coalesce politically apposite symbolics to evoke emotive responses for universal defensive purposes. In contrast to the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War that were or became largely located within the context of the Shi'i political culture, nationalist convictions conveyed herein addresses the multiple political fissures within Iranian society by laying claim to them as deeply rooted, surviving cultural paradigms that subsequently expose the dominant and vast moral matters of the political arena. In turn, the self-revelatory, reconstructed images of past, present, and future cooperate in giving an enduring sense of identity that forms the basis of a new national consciousness. Thus, current Iranian nationalism appears to increasingly meld pre-Islamic and Shi'i Islamic references as well as the "sacred defence" to constitute a new, "modern" identity known as "Iranian" and its attachment to, nay fetishization of, the land called Iran.

## Gay Breyley

### 'Islamic cool' in 21st-century Tehran: Visual representations of a pop Madah

Since the advent of online media such as YouTube, the music video has become one of the most widely circulated forms of visual representation. In the case of Iran, this has enabled not only the circulation of 'underground' music, but also the decontextualised visual representation of Islamic musical forms such as *nohe khani*, or elegiac singing. Since the Iran-Iraq War, *nohe khani* has had an especially significant place in Iranian commemoration. Only a minority of Iran's postrevolutionary generation would claim to be *nohe khani* fans, but that minority plays an important role in Iran's collective memory. This paper examines the ways visual representations of one young Tehrani *Madah*, or *nohe khani* performer, are used by his fans, his management and his detractors. Based on fieldwork in Tehran, it argues that young fans respond

to images that evoke a fashionable romanticism and a sense of spiritual superiority or 'Islamic cool'. The Madah's management promotes such images, online and elsewhere. Meanwhile, detractors of this 'pop Madah' point to the perceived paradoxes of representations they see as flippant and essentially commercial. This paper investigates the significance of these possibilities of visual representation, especially as forms of remembrance, in today's urban Iranian popular culture.

## Peter I. Crawford

### Transcending the other: visual anthropology and the observation and construction of another 'other'

Malinowski's phrase 'the native's point of view' is probably one of the most quoted phrases in the history of anthropology and has certainly often been quoted in the work of many a visual anthropology student I have taught over the past twenty years. This presentation will challenge the notion of 'the native's point of view', deconstructing it in an attempt to demonstrate how it is firmly embedded in a dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' that has formed an intrinsic mode of conception in anthropology in particular and Western thinking in general. Referring to filmic examples, as well as theoretical discourse, the presentation will focus on ways in which visual anthropology and ethnographic film may help us understand the wider issue of cross-cultural representation and ways in which the theories and practices of these may help us develop more sensorially based forms of understanding 'otherness'.

## Shahab Esfandiary

### Mehrjui's Social Comedy and the Representation of the Nation in the Age of Globalization; A Comparative analysis of The Lodgers (1986) and Mum's Guests (2004)

Despite being one of the first Iranian directors to be awarded at a major international film festival, Daryush Mehrjui remains a locally influential figure within Iranian national cinema. With a career that has extended over four decades, he still is capable of making films which are simultaneously popular among public audiences and highly acclaimed by Iranian critics. *Mehman-e Maman* (*Mum's Guests*) -a social comedy he made in 2005- is one example of such

films which has received little critical attention outside Iran. In this paper the representation of the nation in *Mum's Guests* is put in contrast to that of *Ejare Neshin-ha* (*The Lodgers*, 1986), the other popular social comedy which Mehrjui made almost two decades earlier. The aim here, is to consider whether the differences between the two films' modes of representation can be explained in the light of more general transformations and developments in the age of globalization. It is argued that Mehrjui's representation of the nation in *Mum's Guests* demonstrates a conscious acknowledgment of differences based on class, gender, ethnicity and religion, and a more inclusive approach to marginalized sections of Iranian society. The possibility of solidarity among a diversified nation, particularly at moments of crisis, however, is also recognized in the film. The collapse of boundaries between 'the local' and 'the global', as well that of 'high-art' and 'low-art' are also key elements of his more recent film. More over, the two films differ in terms of their portrayal of issues such as happiness, political/ideological conflict, scientific progress and consumerism, all of which can be seen in relation to the new conditions of the age of globalization.

## Ingvild Flaskerud

### Audiovisual Representation of Piety and Ritual: Integrating Research Perspectives and Local Perceptions

The discussion in this paper is based on the production of an ethnographic film, *Standard-bearers of Hussein. Women commemorating Karbala* (35 min. 2003), based on field research conducted in Shiraz between 1999 and 2003. The film introduces examples of Shi´i women's commemoration rituals during Muharram and Safar. It focuses on the symbolic meaning of ritual performance and its expression of belief and piety, and the various roles women hold in preparing and organising rituals. In agreement with main participants in the film, it was produced as a teaching tool. The visual narrative is framed between scholarly interests in the performance of commemoration rituals, as identified by the researcher, and ideas of self-representation and ritual meaning, as understood and identified by local agents. In the paper, I discuss the nature of collaboration between a non-Iranian, non-Muslim female researcher, and local female agents, and how our various positions effected the visual representation of the rituals. In addition, I discuss how the recording of ritual performance in audiovisual media may enhance the researcher's understanding of how local agents translate religious belief into ritual performance in explicit and subtle ways.

## Sara Ganjaei

### Representation of the Iranian Revolution in the BBC documentary "People's Century"

The Iranian revolution has been the subject of many British documentary films since the 1980s. The first comprehensive account of the revolution was made by the BBC in 1995 as an episode of *People's Century*, one of the highly acclaimed TV series, which won many national and international awards. On its own, the film incorporates all the major themes associated with the story of the Iranian revolution and post-revolutionary Iran in as represented in British documentary since 1980. Not only that, but the basic assumptions and presuppositions of the film reveal the thought patterns informing the more general representation of Iran over a period of several decades. This paper argues that the discourse of the film, underpinned by the binaries of modernization/Westernization vs. revolution/Islamization, and secularization/progress vs. religion/backwardness, puts the story of the Iranian Revolution in the general context of a global religious revival, 'a turning back to the fundamentals' of religious beliefs. Thus the revolution comes to be represented as an anti-modern uprising aimed at drawing the country backwards in time to the Middle Ages. This paper discusses how this message is constructed through the rhetoric and the formal structures of the film.

## M.R. Ghanoonparvar

### Cinema as Literature, Literature as Cinema

Iranian filmmakers have kept an eye on Persian literature from the inception of the Iranian cinema and have borrowed not only stories but narrative techniques from literary artists. The relationship between these two media of storytelling began with the early adaptations of classical Persian literature by Abdolhoseyn Sepanta and continued with the work of such renowned filmmakers as Daryush Mehju'i and Amir Naderi who have based some of their films on the short stories and novels of modern fiction writers such as Gholamhoseyn Sa'edi and Sadeq Chubak prior to the Islamic Revolution and the more recent adaptations based on the stories by Hushang Moradi-Kermani and others following the Revolution. This paper argues that while in earlier years Iranian cinema was to some extent influenced by the work of literary artists, gradually starting from the second half of the 20th century, this relationship was reversed and fiction writers began, wittingly or unwittingly, to imitate, especially in their narrative techniques, the work of filmmakers.

## Shahla Haeri

### Making "Mrs. President": A film by S. Haeri

In this paper, I cover the grounds for making my documentary, "Mrs. President: Women and Political Leadership in Iran." I use an audiovisual approach to ethnography to communicate knowledge of other people other cultures in a way that may be more effective with some audiences than a textual ethnography. My target audience was primarily young students – and also the general public - in the United States. The assumption of a causal relationship between veiling and victimization/passivity of "Muslim women" is so deeply etched in the collective consciousness of many non-Muslims that I thought an effective way to challenge such stereotypes is to let them see what some women say and do in their own cultural/ political set up. In making "Mrs. President" I aimed to make my taping of women presidential contenders a shared creation, a "shared ethnography," in which women presidential contenders – not just the anthropologist - reflected, represented, and reinterpreted issues surrounding their society, politics, religion, and gender.

## Christine Horz

### Creating Diasporic Public Spheres: Iranian Immigrants in Public Access TV- Channels in Germany

The presentation will pick up the political and academic discussion about media participation of immigrants in European nation-states. From the viewpoint of communications studies it stresses how Iranian immigrant TV-Producers in Germany create diasporic public spheres on both local and translocal level. In Germany 15 million of the inhabitants have migrant backgrounds, about 120 000 are of Iranian descent. Nevertheless, immigrants are almost invisible in mainstream television or represented inappropriately, face difficulties of professional access to TV industry and have scarcely any political influence on broadcasting boards. As a consequence of this marginalization active Iranian groups are producing TV-shows in Public Access Channels to share their cultural and political debate. The currently 54 so called "Open Channels" in 9 out of 16 federal states are financed through public licence fees. Although free of access for everybody in the local narrowcasting area the aftermath of 9/11 has led to strict regularities for mother tongue programmes like limited air-time and translations into German. Iranian TV-Producers invent different strategies to deal with these and other

obstacles. This exemplary case-study based on qualitative research methods examines for the first time the opportunities and restrictions of authentic Iranian programming in Open Access TV-Channels in Germany.

## Rolf Husmann

### In or Out? Visual Ethnography and the Ethics of Consent

As much as any ethnographic fieldwork, visual ethnography – the shooting, editing and publishing of an ethnographic film – is an activity based on forms of co-operation between the ethnographer-filmmaker and his/her informants or protagonists. Without the consent of those filmed, no anthropological filmmaking is thinkable. Forms of consent include permissions for filming on an official level, active participation in the filming process, co-operation in the post-production process. It can be a written document, or a silent nodding of the head. But it may also be denied: How to deal with that? And how to protect those who gave their consent, if the publication of the images may be dangerous for them? Based on a number of short film excerpts, this presentation shows examples of ethnographic films which do or do not include ethically acceptable forms of representation. It describes ways of co-operation in filmmaking which allow the protagonists to decide about the inclusion or exclusion in the film, and by taking the example of a film on contemporary Iran, discusses potential dangers for the film protagonists and how to avoid them.

## Mehrzad Karimabadi

### Manifesto of Martyrdom: Similarities and differences between Avini's *Ravaayat e Fath (Chronicles of Victory)* and claimed manifestos

In what ways do Avini's words and voice of narration works as a manifesto in Ravaayat e Fath? Is it their presence and modern nature, or the way in which they guide the audience into the world of martyrdom? What does this manifesto tell us through its oppositions and fascinations? Unlike most manifestoes that are created as mere written documents, Avini's Ravaayat e Fath is a manifesto in motion. The voice over is a manifesto of martyrdom woven together with laments and a poetic account of what is happening in and around

the battlefields in about seventy episodes. Although Ravaayat e Fathis in film format, it aligns itself with the characteristics of a formal manifesto. It brings up the idea of martyrdom in a striking manner. The documentary stands out from other manifestos because it is distinguished with Avini's signature ideas expressed in voice over. In every episode, he reinforces the ideology of martyrs who have gone ahead and left the rest of us earthbound. Ravaayat e Fath is aligned with Janet Lyon's account of Manifesto in Manifestoes: Provocation of the Modern. It is "the testimony of a historical present tense spoken in the impassioned voice of its participants" and "embellishes the urgency of struggle through a variety of conventions".

## Maryam Kashani

### A Visual Anthropology of Iran: The Ethnographer, the Adventurer, and the Spy

In my presentation I will incorporate an examination of the 1925 film, GRASS, A Nation's Battle for Life by Cooper, Schoedsack, and Harrison with an experimental/performative approach to ethnographic work in Iran. Grass is an early ethnographic film of the Bakhtiari tribes of Iran, tracing the arduous annual migration across the Zardeh Kuh. Cooper and Schoedsack went on to complete another "ethnographic" film, Chang in Thailand (Siam at the time) before creating the infamous King Kong in 1933. Harrison was a journalist and spy, having spent time in Russian prisons previous to her trip with the Bakhtiari. I will explore these filmmakers approach to ethnography as a capturing of "the Forgotten People," within a context of the call to adventure and its location in the East. The filmic text of Grass and its problematic representations is the starting off point for my own ethnographic project in Iran. I will discuss the idea of anthropologist as adventurer and spy in the current post 9/11 era of Western presence in the Middle East.

## Ahmad Kiarostami

### Missing Myth in the Mainstream

The transmission of cultural discourse in Iran and throughout the Diaspora has changed in recent years to rely more and more on media. This presentation chronicles changes in means and modes of cultural transfer in the years before, during and after the Iranian

revolution, paying closest attention to current discourse shifts through music and especially music videos. Cultural discourse in Iran did not take place through visual means since the beginning; ours was not a visual culture, but rather an oral culture, constructing cultural narratives and memory through stories, literature and poetry. For many years, cultural discourse took place in homes, at story time, or through poems and written stories. Poems and literature that during the time of Hafez and Sadi had ripples of resistance throughout their narratives were later transformed in the years before and during the revolution into a literary movement that overtly expressed opinions and sought to communicate messages and discourse throughout the nation. As Iranian cinema began its popularization internationally, Iranian cinema took its place as a cinema of philosophy and literature, with literary themes running throughout Iranian films the way that dance dominated Bollywood or action dominated Hollywood. As cultural discourse took shape in film, the presence of philosophical and literary approaches was palpable . Literary messages were sent throughout the nation using this new medium of communication. In recent years, we have seen the birth of the internet, and in Iran, the ever-increasing popularization of "blogging" (public narratives written in diary form online). Again, these blogs show written expressions of our story-telling culture, and incorporate poetry, literature and narrative in their writings. In this presentation, through the use of multi-media, these themes and others are explored, paying close attention to the birth of music and music videos as the newest project of modernity, a new cultural discourse.

## Vanessa Langer

### When the artists of Teheran are performing: an experimental video project

Contributions and limitations of an experimental research device, based on audiovisual medium, constitute the main topic of this paper. In Spring 2005, I invited eighteen young Iranian artists (painters, graphic designers, photographers, etc.) to film their daily life using the camera as a diary. My investigation, which extended over a period of a year, focused on what images these young artists use to express themselves and to present their daily life as well as on which filmic form they use. In addition, I conducted a great number of interviews on the topic of the representation of the self. Putting questions about the cinematographic form the artists have chosen to represent their reality as well as about the subjects tackled allowed me to understand their position, whether conscious or unconscious, in the

context of contemporary Iranian society. Their images are rooted in a type of filmic narration, which transgresses the official values and are very revealing of the representation they have of their own identity. In the course of the research, to narrow the analysis, I proposed to five artists, who participated in the initial project, to edit their own short film, which represented at the end the corpus of images on which this study is based. Finally, the research enabled me to reflect on the use of a camera as a research's tool and as a new way of constructing and distributing anthropological knowledge.

## Michelle Langford

### Practical Melodrama: Private Lives and Public Space in Tahmineh Milani's "Fereshteh Trilogy"

This paper will explore some of the complex uses of melodrama in three films by Iranian director Tahmineh Milani. In particular I will focus on how the melodramatic mode allows her to break through the traditional distinctions between public and private in contemporary Iran. Set at various moments in post-revolutionary Iran, her films effectively hint at the history of organised Iranian women's movements (and perhaps lament their failures). Through her use of what I shall call "practical" melodrama, I will argue that Milani advocates a kind of "practical" feminism to be practised in women's everyday lives.

## Maziyar Lotfalian

### Autoethnography as Documentary in Iranian Films and Videos

In recent years a number of visual cultural productions among Iranian artists that mixes personal experiences with self-reflexive stories about Iran, politics, and culture have emerged. Among these are visual arts such as video, photography, and graphic novels. Among the more noteworthy, one can talk about Shirin Neshat's photographic work and how she uses her own body as the site of inscription, Mania Akbari's video art with herself both as its subject and object, and Marjane Satrape's *Persopolis* as a graphic novel, and now animated film, about story of her childhood. In this paper I explore the place of autoethnography in recent Iranian films and videos. Anthropologists, who have in past decades insisted on personal voices as ethnography, have coined the word "autoethography" as a

category that engenders writing on self and society. This genre refers to a range of strategies of writing from autobiography to self-reflexive stories. Authors often situate the self within society through self-narrative in socio-political context. Authors of autoethnography often conduct their practice across multiple social and cultural identities, exploring their different identities creatively through experimentation with technology and through playing with different mediation styles. A range of recent Iranian films and videos have used aesthetic forms and personal experiences as form of representation. Here I focus on Reza Bahraminezhad's autoethnogrpahic films (*Mr. Art* and other films) which mediates between cultural forms, ideological norms, and ethnographic production. I am interested in the question of to what extent his autoethnographic explorations offer a new opening for self expression and cultural critique? To what extent they act as forms of either mediation or representation and to what extent it is a form of "reality" staging? Extending the notion of autoethnography to films and videos of Iranian artists and cultural producers puts into sharp relief how, as a genre of exploring one's own culture, autoethnography does not only tell a personal story but explores the ambiguity of telling story and difficulty of giving voice to one's self and others. This often involves mixing genres; it is often a political resistance (as in the underground production); and it is often about creating distinction in the face of social and political despair.

## Pardis Mahdavi

### The Politics of Pornography in the Islamic Republic of Iran

A new sexual culture is emerging amongst urban Iranian youth which requires further scrutiny. This presentation examines sexual and social practices and gendered experiences of young people (ages 18-25) in contemporary Iran. How do young adults understand and enact their erotic and sexual lives within the laws and restrictions of the Islamic Republic? In particular, this talk focuses on how young Iranians' sexualities are shaped and affected by their access to visual media such as pornographic films and the internet. The goal of the presentation is to describe how visual representations of sexuality and sexual behavior impact the emerging sexual culture in the context of the current regime. Fieldwork conducted between 2000 and 2007 used qualitative, ethnographic methods such as participant observation (with young people, in internet cafes and in cyberspaces such as chat rooms), in-depth interviews and group discussions to describe Iranian young people's formation of a new sexual culture. In this presentation, I will describe the emergence of this new sexual culture, paying close attention to ways in which young people's access to pornography and cybersexual encounters has shaped what they call Iran's Sexual Revolution (*enghelab-I jensi)*.

## Amy Malek

### *Grass* and *People of the Wind*: A Re-Assessment of Context, Ideology, and Ethnography

In an attempt to surpass the genre of travelogue, three Americans – Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, and Marguerite Harrison – traveled to southwestern Iran to film the bi-annual migration of the Bakhtiari tribes and their flocks from winter to summer pastures. In *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (1925), Schoedsack's exquisite framing of long shots captured the vast movement of an estimated 50,000 people and 500,000 animals in desert caravans, grassy plains, icy river crossings, and snowy mountain vistas. The technical requirements of *Grass* alone suggest its importance in early ethnographic and documentary film, but problematic elements, such as its flimsily contrived storyline and melodramatic and essentializing intertitles, have presented problems for its perceived importance in ethnographic film history and as a representation of Iran. In 1976, Anthony Howarth (with consulting anthropologist David M. Brooks and narrator James Mason) filmed *People of the Wind*, again following the Bakhtiari tribes along their migration, and employed cinematography emphasizing the great color and sounds of the movement of people *en masse*. In this paper, I will use theoretical frameworks from visual anthropology and film theory to complicate the reading of these films, first by placing *Grass* within the context of the intentions and ideological imperatives of its filmmakers. I will then argue that, although *People of the Wind* is often visually captivating, it too has problematic elements as an ethnographic film of the Bakhtiari, including a missed opportunity for visual repatriation of *Grass* to its source community.

## Hamid Naficy

### Trends and Types of Ethnographic Cinema in Iran

Ethnographic filmmaking emerged strongly in the 1960s partly because the rapid modernization and its resulting population displacements and
social restructuring brought urgency to the task of documenting and analyzing the country's traditions and ways of life before their disappearance and partly because of institutional support by the state. Nationalism was also a factor, both in its religious manifestations—particularly Islamic—and its secular manifestations. Most ethnographic documentaries in Iran were not made by anthropologists or filmmakers trained in anthropology or ethnography. Neither were they deeply linked to university

anthropology departments or research centers—all of them state funded. As such, few films were part of larger academic anthropological studies or organically informed by anthropological or ethnographic concerns. Nevertheless, the majority of the filmmakers were supported by powerful national governmental cultural and media organizations, such as the Pahlavi era's Ministry of Culture and Art and National Iranian Radio and Television and the postrevolution era's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic. Some of them were freelance filmmakers commissioned by the state, private sector, or non-governmental agencies to make ethnographic documentaries and some were civil servants employed by state organizations. Because of these structural and contextual features, the ethnographic documentaries were often embedded in politics, from their conception to reception. Textually, they tended to be straightforward, linear films that relied heavily on a wordy voice-of God narration; however, there were many that experimented with visual, musical, lyrical, and structural innovations. They can be divided into several thematic types, which evolved over time and in particular with the 1978-79 Revolution and the subsequent eight year war with Iraq.

## Serazer Pekerman

### Visual Patterns as Spiritual Passages: The Becoming-Indiscernible of the Hero in Iranian Cinema

Contemporary Iranian Cinema has a considerable amount of heroes who are re-framed in front or behind a window of a vehicle in long takes and medium close-up. In this pattern, the car, the bus or minibus, serves as a space in motion in a fixed frame, creating a re-framing tool, a barrier or a border between the protagonist and the city and/or the society. This paper intends to question the parallels between the car window used as a tool of re-framing the characters, and the repetition of the geometric patterns in Islamic arts and architecture. In Islamic decorative arts, pattern brings the disappearance of a beginning, an end, and a point of view, represents the existence beyond time and space, loss of the individual identity in order to become an indiscernible part of a unified whole. In many Iranian films a car or a bus is preferable to an ordinary interior of a house for framing the space of intimacy of the hero/heroine versus the images of Iran in constant motion. Exploring the pattern as a spiritual passage in connection with the Deleuze and Guattarian concept of *becoming*, this paper will comment on the border between public and private places, the society and the individual, the gendered identity of the transnational filmic space in motion and the conflict/trauma of the hero as an individual becoming-indiscernible.

## Kamran Rastegar

### *Bashu* and *The Runner*: War, Trauma and Maturation

This paper examines the question how two Iranian films of the mid-1980s addressed the traumas of the post-revolutionary period, including the Iran-Iraq war, through the motif of maturation, and through the representation of ethnically and socially marginalised characters. The films "Davandeh" and "Bashu: Gharibeye Kuchak" both function as war-time texts (even if the former does not directly reference the war itself) but are unique in their exploration of questions of post-revolutionary traumas as they draw their narratives along the arc of the maturation of their child characters. In this sense they function to represent a more complex approach to Iranian nationalism, produced at a moment when concepts of nationalism were undergoing profound transformation – as visual cultural texts they anticipate a move to reconfigure Iranian nationalist tropes away from the prior ethnic particularism, but also away from the pan-Islamist nationalism promoted by the war-time Iranian government and its cultural organs.

## Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri

### Problems of Representing Iranian Women on Film

My experience of showing my documentary film *Women Like Us* in order to counter some of the skewed views of Iranian women led me to explore some of the problems of representation. After viewing the film, audiences persisted to see Iranian women as helpless and victimized, despite what they saw on the screen. Here I explore the reasons why this view of the Iranian female is so entrenched in the western mind and show clips of films by Iranian filmmakers that reinforce this view and those that break it. Prevalent images of Iranian women in American film/art world show Iranian women from the western point of view as victims in prison or their prison-like lives, terrorized by their environment and by men. Some of these films are: *The Circle*, by Jafar Panahi, about women in prison; *Two Women* by Tahmineh Milani, about a talented university student oppressed by her husband; *Divorce Iranian Style* by Kim Longinotto, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, about tragic divorce proceedings in Iranian courts; Shirin Neshat photographs/films on Iranian women, including *Women of Allah* series, showing women in veil bearing guns and faces painted with calligraphy, and *Turbulant* (1998) video installation of a woman singing, while her voice is muted. "Neshat's concerns have often coincided with those of the evening news." (Lauren

Collins, New Yorker 10/22/07) While many of these films show truths of the patriarchal Iranian society, by focusing only on this aspect of women's lives, western audiences have been led to a one dimensional understanding of women's lives in Iran.

## Hamidreza Sadr

### Alienation of Intellectuals: Anti-Intellectualism in Iranian Films

There is a long history of anti-intellectualism in Iran, particularly evident in cinema. Repeatedly through the decades, Iranian films ignored the intellectuals and the ideal man of the films was usually the strong or the violent one. This is linked to a kind of hidden xenophobia, since the intellectuals is seen as ca Westernized presence. Each generation has habitually made fun of those with intellectuals pretensions, creating an absolute and value-laden division between ordinary people and intellectuals, who is the negative against which traditions are measured. This paper is about the fabrication of ignoring intellectuals in Iranian films and examines the key films of Iranian film from this perspective.

## Elhum Shakerifar

### Visual Representations of Transgenders in Iran

I would like to give a paper on my personal experiences researching visual representation of the transgender situation and community as well as the reasons, namely the gender segregation and clearly defined gender roles in Iranian society, that render the legal, religious and social attitudes towards transsexuals in Iran somewhat unique. Furthermore, in view of the large number of films dedicated to the subject of transgenders in Iran, I would like to dedicate one section of my paper to the discussion of how films commissioned outside of Iran differ hugely with those produced within the country. Does an element of orientalism persist in the work of Iranians living abroad, or are they simply more conditioned by the demands of broadcasting, which after all, is simply an economic matter? Iranians inside the country on the other hand have no guarantee that their films will ever receive television or cinema audiences, yet they make films for the art of film and the truth of the message, and in this are far closer to the anthropological standards we should expect from documentaries

commissioned everywhere. This is an interesting dichotomy, which I have repeatedly been confronted with as a result of my current research and one which raises questions about visual standards, about who has the right to represent, and how representation should take place.

## Faegheh Shirazi

### Protectors of Chastity, Promoters of War: Images of Iranian Women in Poster Arts and Graffiti

The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) began almost 6 months after the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. These two historical events have made a drastic change not only in terms of political power but also in the daily social lives of the populace. Ever since these events, there has been a struggle as how to represent images of women in public. Rigid rules, regulations, and censorship were set by the Islamic Republic of Iran to protect the dignity and chastity of Muslim Iranians and return them to the "right" path. Posters, banners, and even postage stamps taught the Iranian women the "correct" way of public dress. The semantic fusion of *hejab* (veiling, a symbol of return to Islam) and *jihad* (holy war, a symbol of sacrifice to defend the country and the religion) in the context of martyrdom is evident from the public visual campaigns. Women's public portrayers of defenders of Islam and supporters of martyrdom in various forms are visually presented. In addition to the pictorial images, this study will also looks at a host of intense campaign for chastity and hiiab propagated through textual documentations of Graffiti. I will be looking at various role assignments expected of women as evident from both the visual campaigns and Graffiti during this historical era of modern Iranian history. In this paper, *hejab* is a reference to its customary form of contemporary Iranian style of coverage of head and entire body without covering the face.

## Sussan Siavoshi

### 20 Fingers and Elite Factionalism

Recent studies of Iranian cinema have highlighted the connection between the cultural traditions and the contemporary Iranian films. Many of these studies address the broad social, political, economic, and religious outlines in their analysis of the cultural traditions in

connections to films. This study is more specific. It draws parallels between a 2004 film "Twenty Fingers" and the post-revolutionary transitional polity with a focus on the factional nature of its elite. The movie, directed by Mania Akbari, consists of seven vignettes and follows the prolonged and rocky relationship between a man and a woman from courtship to marriage and then to some more. As such it lends itself, easily and consciously, to study of gender. What at first glance might seem odd or farfetched, however, is to employ the film as a metaphor for understanding the dynamic of factional politics of a transitional polity. This study is an attempt to go beyond such initial reactions and to make a case for a multilayered and comprehensive connection (involving technical, organizational, and substantive aspects) between the film and the character of the Iranian polity. The story of Twenty Fingers is also the story of the contemporary and transitional Iranian polity.

## Annabelle Sreberny

### De-exoticizing the Image: The Representation of Everyday life in Iran

Images of Iran often suffer from exoticization, both inside and outside Iran. Concerned with "wow" factor and big issues, representations of Iran often cluster around increasingly well-worn themes such as war and women. But with the increasing accessibility to and acceptance of the means of visual production, a greater range of imagery is being produced. As "small media" helped the revolutionary process itself, so blogging is said to be the continuation of politics by other means. But there is also emerging a humourous and playful imagery that reflexively interrogates the dynamics of everyday life in Iran, especially in Tehran, and that projects a different kind of politics. I am interested in exploring images that focus on the ordinary, the everyday and that work to democratise the representations of Iran.

## Mohammad Tahaminejad

### Iranian Patterns and Experiences of Anthropological Films

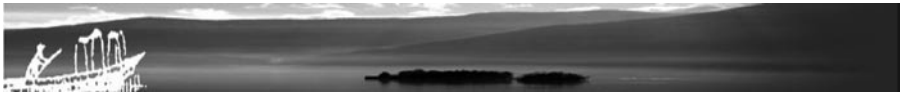
Anthropological aspects of Iranian documentary films will be explored in my representational history of the phenomenon. So my interest is to work on history of our director's anthropological approaches to culture and life. How we have recorded and

represented our cultural world during the time? I have tried to research and portray the modes of representation and rhetoric aspects of A. films e.g. expository, observational and reflective mode of Iranian doc films .But what makes an anthropological survey different? How we can find out that we are confronting with reality without the matter of reference? I hope that I can present a kind of criticism (discipline) of our ethnographic films creation stages. I think that generalisation of this issue _ as an approach will help to distinct, recognise and produce ethnographic films about culture and life better.

## Farhad Varahram

### Anthropological Cinema without Anthropology

The first Iranian documentaries date back to the first days of introduction of cinema into Iran. Like their western counterpart, they have looked at the everyday life of society, using an observational mode. In the West, the anthropologic film, soon after defining itself as an independent *genre* different from documentary cinema in general, got in touch with academic circles and institutions of social science and as a means of study and documentation, provided valuable services to the anthropology as a scientific discipline. In Iran, contrary to what happened in the west, with a remarkable yet unique exception (the subject of "Film and Anthropology" in the faculty of Social Sciences of Tehran University in 1973-76), the anthropologic film was sponsored by Iranian national TV and other state institutions and continued its way independently, without any systematic link to the universities and centers of anthropologic studies and research. Thus, in our country, anthropologic film developed without knowledge about anthropology as a science, by some filmmakers inclined to documentary cinema. So it can justly be called "anthropologic cinema without anthropology". With only a small number of films about anthropologic subjects, which would be correct to be called ethnographic films, one can conclude that no major documentary work has been created in Iran worthy of the title of anthropologic film, in cooperation with anthropologists or scientific centers, analyzed or interpreted by anthropologists or of any practical use.



## Centro Incontri Umani - Ascona

The Cross Cultural Centre Ascona (Centro Incontri Umani Ascona) is a recognized Swiss Foundation. It was set up by Dr. Angela Hobart, London, in the memory of her parents, Dr. Edmund and Margiana Stinnes - von Gaevernitz. The aim of the Centre is to encourage understanding, respect and peace internationally, which is especially important in our contempory era, beset by natural disasters and widespread human conflict. The Centre addresses issues of cross cultural concern in the domains of society, politics, philosophy, art, religion and medicine. By encouraging exchange among scholars, students, artists and laypeople of different countries and disciplines, the Centre seeks to honour the capacity of humans to revitalize consciousness and remake their lived realities.

***The Centro Incontri Umani,*** in Ascona, Switzerland, encourages understanding, respect and peace internationally. The Centre offers five residency fellowships for scholars or writers who are concerned with significant aspects of human experience. Applicants from the social sciences or any area of the humanities who are completing writing projects are primarily welcomed.

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## The Iran Society

Registered Charity No. 248678

Founded in 1935, the Society acts as a gathering point for those who are interested in Iran's heritage and culture. It is strictly non-political. Its object is to promote learning and advance education in the subject of Iran, its peoples and culture and particularly to advance education through the study of language, literature, art, history, religions, antiquities, usages, institutions and customs of Iran. The Society's principal activities are seven lectures a year on a wide range of subjects, publication of occasional monographs, an annual study day (e.g. on Persian carpets or manuscripts), publication of the Society's journal and an annual reception for members and guests.

The Society also offers a travel grant to a graduate or undergraduate student in the field of Persian studies at a British university who wishes to carry out a literary, historical or cultural project in Iran during the summer vacation and is willing to lecture to the Society when he or she returns to the UK. Thanks to the generosity of our corporate members and of bmi, the airline, the grant will be of a return air ticket to Tehran and the sum of £350 for living expenses in Iran.

To become a member of The Iran Society an individual or couple must first be proposed and seconded by existing members of The Iran Society. Please contact the Hon Secretary if you need help finding a Proposer or Seconder. Membership is annual and must be paid by bankers order. Annual membership dues are: individual £15 per year; joint £20 per year; student free (max 4 years); corporate £150 per year

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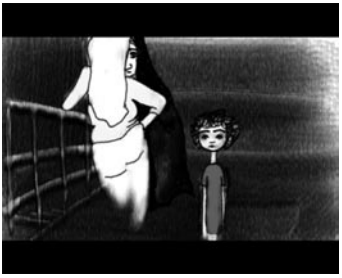
# FILM SYNOPSES

**Aids, Iran 2004: The Lovers, the Victims** (*Eydz, Iran 1383*)

Director: Mohammad Ehsani, Kamal Bahar
Date: 2004
Running time: 37 min
Country: Iran
Contact: ehsani_tab@hotmail.com
Synopsis:
AIDS doesn't officially exist in Iran; however, the virus is spreading at a meteoric rate, more than three times faster than the birth-rate. The number of unreported cases is estimated at around 45,000.First-hand accounts by the homeless, drug addicts, prostitutes, doctors and pharmacists underlined by statistics challenge the hypocritical and sometimes false official statements by revealing the harsh reality.
Subject(s): Aids, drugs, social boundaries.



**And Life Went on** (*Va Zendegi Edameh Dasht*)

Director: Maryam Mohajer
Date: 2007
Running time: 6 min
Country: U.K.
Contact: mmplondon@yahoo.co.uk

Synopsis:
The Iran-Iraq war… All the neighbors rush down to the basement shelter. So what is going to happen in this shelter? Would every woman cry and scream whilst every man shivers and chews his mustache with rage and fear? You will be surprised!
Subject(s): Iran-Iraq war, trauma.

## **A Window Facing the Sun** (*Panjereyi Rubeh Aftab*)

Director: Bijan Zamanpira
Date: 2006
Running time: 12 min
Country: Iran
Synopsis:
A carnival shadow-play of prayers, ceremonies, the land and the clouds as a desert community in Iran beseeches the clouds to rain water and life down upon their scorching land. A triumphant, poetic invocation of the source of life.
Subject(s): Kurdistan, ritual of rain request.

## **Back Vocal** (*Sedayeh Dovom*)

Director: Mojtaba Mirtahmasb
Date: 2004
Running time: 40 min
Country: Iran
Contact: yasna_mi@hotmail.com
Synopsis:
24 years after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the legal prohibition against female solo singing in Iran, rumours about females being permitted to sing in duets have encouraged female singers to take the initiative to record and release their musical albums.
Subject(s): music and Islam, gender issues, women singers.

## Best in the West

Director: Maryam Kashani
Date: 2006
Running time: 71 min
Country: U.S.A.
Contact: myrmur@gmail.com
Synopsis:
Best in the West is the story of a group of male friends who leave the country of their birth to seek education, opportunity, and adventure abroad. In relating the events of their emigration from Iran to the San Francisco Bay Area, the film explores the personal choices and relationships of these young men as they establish their lives and maintain a community in a new land. What began as an oral history of one family's emigration to the West soon expanded into the documentation of a transitional period in history that altered the landscape of international geopolitics and the lives of these men.
Subject(s): Diaspora, immigration.

## Be Like Others

Director: Tanaz Eshaghian
Date: 2008
Running time: 74 min
Country: Canada, Iran, U.K., U.S.A.
Contact: tanaze@gmail.com

Synopsis:
In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a country with strict social mores and traditional values, sex-change operations are legal. Over twenty years ago, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa (religious edict) making sex change permissible for "diagnosed transsexuals." Yet homosexuality is still punishable by death. With Iran's international arms negotiations dominating news headlines worldwide, a very private kind of drama is unfolding behind the scenes. Highly feminine and attracted to members of the same sex, yet forced to live in secret for fear of retribution, a generation of young Iranian men are adopting an identity legally allowed to them—transsexual. In pursuit of what one man calls simply, "a decent life," they flock to the country's best-established gender reassignment surgeon, Dr. Bahram Mir Jalali, and are counseled by 24-year-old Vida, a post-op woman who claims to be "reborn" but warns of dangers that still await. Iranian-American filmmaker Tanaz Eshaghian accompanies several young men as they contemplate and prepare for their transformation, then follows them into and out of surgery. Intimate and unflinching, BE LIKE OTHERS is a fascinating look at those on the fringes of Iranian life—those looking for acceptance through the most radical of means.
Subject(s): transsexuality, plastic surgery, gender issues, religious boundaries.

## Behesht Zahra: Mothers of the Martyrs

Director: Mehran Tamadon
Date: 2004
Running time: 47 min
Country: France-Iran
Contact: mehrantamadon@gmail.com
Synopsis:
Behesht Zahra, the Tehran cemetery, is a few dozen kilometers away from the city. One part of this cemetery, with about 33,000 graves, is devoted to soldiers who lost their lives during the war against Iraq. Every Thursday, this cemetery is crowded with the families of these young martyrs.
Subject(s): Iran-Iraq war, martyrdom, gender issues, loss, trauma.

## Children of the Prophet

Director: Sudabeh Mortezai
Date: 2006
Running time: 90 min
Country: Austria
Contact: www.childrenoftheprophet.com
Synopsis:
The martyrdom of the Twelver Shia's third Imam in 680 AD is a historically defining moment for Shia identity. Nowhere are the rites and rituals as elaborate and widespread as in Iran, the only Muslim country with a Shia population of over 90%. The film goes to the heart of the rituals through the perspective of the protagonists, their beliefs and the various roles the ceremonies play in the lives of different people. We follow them closely in their everyday lives and how they prepare for the festival and experience each part of the ritual through their personal approach and viewpoint.
Subject(s): Shiite rituals, Moharram, religious boundaries, religious space, youth, fashion, social relationships.

## Clerical Garb: Last Prove (*Lebas Rohani: Prove Akhar*)

Director: Reza Haeri
Date: 2008
Running time: 30 min
Country: Iran
Contact: rhaeri@yahoo.com

Synopsis:
Mr. Arabpour speaks to us of the different styles of religious garments, all based on the traditional "Aba" and "Amameh" (like those of my grandfather). The newer styles, more sculpted, more tailored, with defined seams and pockets, are for the new strain of Ayatollahs… the more reformist or "democratic" ones, of whom Khatami is the best example. Mr. Arabpour shows us how he designs and makes the religious garments, and how he adapts them to different religious leaders and their needs. One may want a pocket for a mobile phone, while another wants a simplified version, without any frills.
Subject(s): religious garments, abba, ammameh.

## Caught Between Two Worlds

Director: Pershang Sadegh-Vaziri, Simin Farkhondeh
Date: 2007
Running time: 58 min
Country: USA- Iran
Contact: psv1@nyu.edu
Synopsis:
A documentary that depicts the diverse lives of Iranians in the US who make up a nation in exile. They live in Los Angeles, New York, Washington D.C. and other US cities. Many of them left Iran after the 1979 revolution, the departure of the Shah and the start of the Islamic Republic. They are artists, political activists, journalists, academics, Moslem and Jewish, young and old. The film shows the complexities of the Iranian experience in the U.S. for those who have made it their home.
Subject(s): Diaspora, Minority.

## **Faces** (*Chehreha*)

Director: Shahin Parhami
Date: 2007
Running time: 100 min
Country: Canada
Contact: cinemashena@sympatico.ca
Synopsis:
Documentarian Shahin Parhami interviews 10 Iranian-Canadian artists who have practiced their craft in the West since the revolution. The interviews are complemented by free-form montages which center on the changing landscape of Iranian art and history. The audience not only sees these sequences for themselves, but also sees them through the eyes of veteran actor Shahram Golchin, who is subjected to a different montage upon awaking each morning.
Subject(s): visual and dramatic art, Diaspora, trauma.

## **Football, Iranian Style** (*Football Beh Sabk-e Irani*)

Director: Maziar Bahari
Date: 2001
Running time: 50 min
Country: Iran
Contact: maziarbahari@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
100,000 soccer fans jump up and down with extraordinary enthusiasm in a sold-out stadium. The ones dressed in blue are rooting for Esteghlal, the ones in red for Persepolis - those being the two most popular teams in Iran. All 100,000 fans are men, as women are not allowed inside the stadium. Still, Maziar Bahari also portrays women in his documentary about Iranian soccer fans - a girl who anxiously visits a public practice soccer field to meet her hero and a young woman who hides her ball on the roof of her house as she cannot play in the street.
Subject(s): football, sport, social fashion, popular culture.

## **Here is the Ball, Here is the Field** (*In Guy, In Meydan*)

Director: Maryam Haghpanah
Date: 2007
Running time: 28 min
Country: Iran
Contact: Haghpanah_m@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
Mehdi is the farmer who has planted Tehran's first polo field. When he had been working in the Polo Federation maintaining the field he learned the game of polo, and now he is one of the Polo Federation's players.
Subject(s): sport, polo.

## **Imamzadeh Internet** (*Emamzadeh Internet*)

Director: Reza Haeri
Date: 2004
Running time: 26 min
Country: Iran
Contact: rhaeri@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
Entering a room lit by multiple computer screens, director Reza Haeri introduces us to a range of Iranians who use the internet for romantic chats, spiritual growth, or networking beyond small towns. An imam answers religious questions from Iranians both at home and in the Diaspora over his website. A young man resurrects his village on the internet as a tourist attraction. Young Iranian women find space for themselves in women-only internet cafes. A bold and fresh view of the cultural transformation that the internet and internet cafes—"cybercoffees"—have had on the seemingly rigid social fabric of Iran.
Subject(s): internet, communication, youth, religion.

## **Infidels** (*Koffar*)

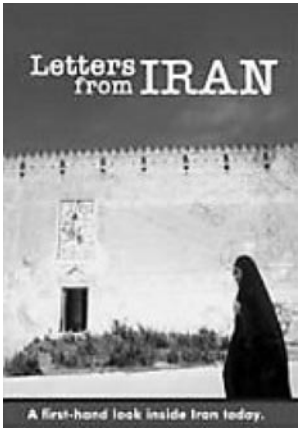
Director: Bahman Kiarostami
Date: 2004
Running time: 40 min
Country: Iran
Contact: bkiarostami@gmail.com
Synopsis:
The Godars are nomadic gypsies who migrated from India to Iran. Their original religion, animism, was based on the belief that natural objects and phenomena possess lives and souls. During the Islamic Revolution they were forced to convert, and although they are now officially Shiite Muslims, they are still outcasts and considered infidels. Infidels recounts the four ways that the Godars make their living: dancing, acting, hunting and music, and showcases their dedication to preserving their art and age-old rituals.
Subject(s): minorities, gypsies, ethnomusicology.

## **Iranian Bazaars** (*Bazarhayeh Iran*)

Director: Peyman Zandi
Date: 2007
Running time: 60 min
Country: Iran
Contact: iampeyman1979@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
This film introduces daily markets, permanent bazaars and centuries-old bazaars in Iran, also looking at the buildings related to bazaars such as caravanserais, bathhouses, mosques and traditional sport clubs. In this documentary film we become acquainted with the manners and customs, way of life, and occupations of Iranian people in bazaars.
Subject(s): Iranian traditional bazaars, daily markets.

**Karb** (*Karb*)

Director: Mahdi Moniri
Date: 2002
Running time: 19 min
Country: Iran
Contact: Mahdi_moniri@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
Karb is a special religious object made of wood. In some communities in the north of Iran there exists a special ceremony with the name of Karbzani; this ceremony is in memorial of the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, grandchild of the Prophet Mohammad, during Moharram.
Subject(s): Moharram rituals, Shiite material culture.




**Letters from Iran** (*Namehayi az Iran*)

Director: Nezam Manouchehri
Date: 2004
Running time: 33 min
Country: U.S.A.
Contact: nezzaamman@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
A personal revelation of life in Iran that goes beyond its individual surroundings to include important layers of the current social reality, this is the tale of a Western-educated, upper middle-class Iranian, who has returned from America.
Subject(s): trauma, Diaspora.

## **Leyla** (*Leyla*)

Director: Amin Ghadami
Date: 2006
Running time: 32 min
Country: Iran
Contact: Ghadami98@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
In December 2003 Bam, one of Iran's ancient cities, was hit by an earthquake. Isabel Munos, a Spanish photographer, came to Bam 18 months after the earthquake for a photography project. One of her subjects, Mohammad Akbari, tells the story of his sister Leyla and her family who died under the ruins of their house in the disaster.
Subject(s): Bam earthquake, loss and trauma.

## **Lost Melodies** (*Navahay-e Gomshodeh*)

Director: Alireza Ghasemkhan
Date: 2008
Running time: 24 min
Country: Iran
Contact: ghassemkhan@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
The first Iranian documentary film in which Master H. Alizadeh explores and explains the origin of pre-Islamic musical instruments and statutes of musicians that have been found in archaeological excavations in Iran.
Subject(s): musical instruments, ethnomusicology, archaeology, history of music.

**Mokarrameh: Memories and Dreams** (*Mokarrameh: Khaterat va Royaha*)

Director: Ebrahim Mokhtari
Date: 1999
Running time: 48 min
Country: Iran
Synopsis:
A fascinating and intimate portrait of a seemingly unlikely artist, Mokarrameh, a widow living in rural Iran who dips into her memories as well as colorful local legends to create vivid, detailed paintings. Her intense desire to create began when she lost her cow; distraught, she consoled herself by painting it on a rock. Now, years later, Mokarrameh's home literally overflows with her paintings. Originally, she worked with mud and cow dung; now she uses paints bought by her son. A disturbing commentary on the role of women emerges when her husband's first wife comes for tea. Amidst their bickering, the two women recall their hard lives, and Mokarrameh reveals that her art is a "means of substance."
Subject(s): visual and popular art, mural painting.

**Passage through the Unknown…** (*Obur az Nemidanam…*)

Director: Khosrow Sinai
Date: 2002
Running time: 34 min
Country: Iran
Contact: ksinai@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
A film about the Iranian poet and artist M. E. Jafari, how he works, how he teaches, and how he is.
Subject(s): visual art, painting, creativity.

## Mrs. President: Women and Political Leadership in Iran

(*Khanum Raisjomhur: Zanan va Rahbari-ye Siasi dar Iran*)

Director: Shahla Haeri
Date: 2002
Running time: 46 min
Country: U.S.A.Iran
Contact: shaeri@bu.edu
Synopsis:
In the summer of 2001, 47 Iranian women neither affiliated with nor supported by any political party registered themselves as candidates for the presidential elections. Due to the Guardian Council's interpretation of a clause in the constitution, none of the women were allowed to run. This documentary presents the thoughts and opinions of six female candidates who agreed to be interviewed, along with the commentary of two female Iranian journalists who cover political developments for magazines in their country. They discuss their efforts in trying to change both governmental and popular opinion regarding the role of women in Iranian politics and society. Produced by Shahla Haeri, Director of Boston University's Women's Studies Program.
Subject(s): women and political activities, presidential election, social boundaries.

## My Uncle, the Patriarch

Director: Abbas Yousefpour
Date: 2007
Running time: 50 min
Country: Germany
Contact: abbas.yousefpour@iwf.de

Synopsis:
This film is a portrait of the filmmaker's uncle, the patriarch Haj Taghi, an elderly bazaar shoe merchant in Borujerd, Western Iran. After a car accident he had to hand over the business to his sons. They talk about economic and family problems, many of them resulting from the change from traditional to modern values in contemporary Iranian society.
Subject(s): daily life in Iran.

**Nose Iranian Style** (*Damagh Be Sabk-e Irani*)

Director: Mehrdad Oskouei
Date: 2005
Running time: 52 min
Country: Iran
Contact: m_oskouei@hotmail.com
Synopsis:
Documentary filmmaker Mehrdad Oskouei considers the epidemic of nose jobs in contemporary Iran, the world leader in plastic surgery with an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 operations each year. In a country that discourages personal expression and disdains Western culture, young Iranians eagerly change their noses to model images in European and American fashion magazines. With a light touch, Oskouei listens to patients and surgeons comment on this enigmatic phenomenon.
Subject(s): plastic surgery, sex and beauty, youth, fashion.

## **Oh, Protector of the Gazelle** (*Ya Zamen-e Ahu*)

Director: Parviz Kimiavi
Date: 1970
Running time: 26 min
Country: Iran
Contact: parvizkimiavi@yahoo.fr
Synopsis:
A masterpiece of the history of documentary cinema. The film which was shelved for many years focuses on men and women visiting the shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Shiite Imam, in the city of Mashhad in the North East of Iran. Will the life of the believers change at the end of the day? According to a legend, people call Imam Reza the Guardian of Deer. It is said that Imam Reza once protected a deer chased by a hunter.
"There is the religious belief which leads the human beings to the shrine. All that I do is to show the space between the hands of the believers and the shrine. The symbolism in my film is rooted in reality. All the human beings and things in the film are real, nothing has been arranged."
Subject(s): Imam Reza's shrine, the servants of the shrine, Shiite rituals and space.

**Omidvar Brothers** (*Baradaran-e Omidvar*)

Director: Bijan Mirbaqeri
Date: 2002
Running time: 27 min
Country: Iran
Synopsis:
The adventures that occurred during the great round-the-world journey of the Omidvar brothers in the 1950s.
Subject(s): travel

**Our Times...** (*Ruzegar-e Ma*)

Director: Rakhshan Bani-Etemad
Date: 2002
Running time: 65 min
Country: Iran
Synopsis:
Subject(s): women and political activities, presidential election, social boundaries.

**Rakhsh on Flesh** (*Rakhsh bar Naghsh*)

Director: Mohammad Ehsani
Date: 2003
Running time: 14 min
Country: Iran
Contact: ehsani_tab@hotmail.com
Synopsis:
This is a documentary about the life and work of an old masseur in one of the old bath houses of Tabriz, who massages backs and shoulders there (in the traditional way). He works hard and is also a story-teller, recounting stories of the *Shahnameh* – Book of Kings - in tea-houses every night.
Subject(s): teahouses, *Shahnameh* recitation, traditional bath massage.

**Roya and Omid** (*Roya va Omid*)

Director: Elhum Shakerifar
Date: 2006
Running time: 15 min
Country: U.K.
Contact: elhumshakerifar@hotmail.com

Synopsis:
'Roya and Omid' is an exploration of transsexuality in the Islamic setting of Iran. Bardia, a young female-to-male transsexual, reflects on his childhood spent in the wrong body, when he was known as Roya ('dream' in Persian), but wished to be Omid ('hope' in Persian). His narrative is crossed by the insightful comments of several male-to-female transsexuals in Iran – Donya, Handry, Leila and Shirin, who have to endure the daily scorn of society in their new roles as women.

Subject(s): transsexuality, plastic surgery, gender issues, religious boundaries.

## **Seven Blind Female Filmmakers** (*Haft Filmsaz-e Zan-e Nabina*)

Director: Mohammad Shirvani
Date: 2008
Running time: 115 min
Country: Iran
Contact: info@royabeen-media.com
Synopsis:
A group of women were taught the basics of filmmaking in a workshop under the supervision of Mohammad Shirvani, and learnt (without getting help from sighted people) how to portray their surroundings with small digital cameras. The result of this experience is short documentary films shot and directed by the people we consider unable to see.
Subject(s): blind women, gender issues, minority, camera as eye.

## **Standard-bearers of Hussein: Women Commemorating Karbala**

Director: Ingvild Flaskerud
Date: 2003
Running time: 35 min
Country: Norway
Contact: Ingvild.Flaskerud@sv.uit.no
Synopsis:
In parallel to Shia Muslim men's mourning ceremonies during Moharram and Safar, women gather in gender-specific rituals acting as hosts, leaders, assistants, servants, lay participants and financial supporters. In the present film we meet two women who often host rituals in their home and/or in a privately owned *Hosseiniyeh*. We also meet one of the ritual leaders whom they invite to lead ceremonies.
Subject(s): Moharram rituals, women's rituals, gender issues.

**Statues of Tehran** (*Mojasamehay-e Tehran*)

Director: Bahman Kiarostami
Date: 2008
Running time: 60 min
Country: Iran
Contact: bkiarostami@gmail.com
Synopsis:
This film is on the statues of Tehran and provides a brief overview of sculpture in this city while focusing on two works in Tehran. The first is a piece by Bahman Mohassess which he created in the 1970s for the then Royal Family and became one of the first modern works to be erected in Tehran. However, the city which became a permanent exposition of revolutionary and ideological works following the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War was no longer a favorable host for this sculpture and it was thus destined to disintegration and storage. In contrast with the above artwork, the film chooses Iraj Esskandari's statue in Enghelab (Revolution) Circus as the second piece which has been standing in one of the most major locations of Tehran for the last 27 years symbolizing the Revolution and the War. Nowadays, this statue is to be dismantled and replaced by a subway station. Esskandari is dismayed but the artists of his generation and conviction and also decision-makers and managers are jubilant that Tehran is ridding itself of this sculpture. The aforesaid managers are even after restoring and re-erecting the sculpture of Bahman Mohassess despite his absence and indifference. But does the postmodern, ideology-ridden, and yet forgetful city of Tehran enjoy the readiness to once again host the work of Mohassess? More broadly speaking, what is the function of monuments in Tehran? In a city with a quality of forgetting its historical periods, memorials are built then to commemorate which historical periods?
Subject(s): visual art, artists, art in post-revolutionary Iran.

## **Tehran: 11pm** (*Tehran: 11 Shab*)

Director: Vanessa Langer, Nasrin
Date: 2007
Running time: 26 min
Country: Switzerland- Iran
Contact: vanessa.langer@romandie.com
Synopsis:
In the stripped-down setting of her bedroom, a young 23-year-old Iranian woman opens a door to her private life. This fragmented space is gradually built as Nasrin reveals herself. The sincerity with which she recognizes the constraints of her enclosed space generates a game of hide-and-seek between her and the camera. With candour and clarity, her gaze creates a meeting place. It is between these four walls, late in the night, that Nasrin is freed from imposed values.
Subject(s): gender issues, youth, artist's life, fashion.

## Tehrani

Director: Daniel Frampton
Date: 2006
Running time: 40 min
Country: U.K.
Contact: djf@thinkingfilms.co.uk
Synopsis:
Our understanding of contemporary Iran is subtly marred by the rhetoric of the "axis of evil" and the debate over nuclear weapons. Tehrani is simply an attempt to rebalance that rhetoric by giving a voice to someone living in the heart of this country. Ali Mashad, a young middle-class Iranian living in north-west Tehran, reveals Iran to be a country of contradictions: run under Islamic law, it also has major social problems, but he and his friends are wary of the usual media representations of his country. "We are trying to find a way for living, just for living. This is our life, and this is our government, and we want to try to live with it, to make a deal with it - to find our ways in it.'
Subject(s): contemporary Iran, daily life.

**The Faces on the Wall** (*Chehrehha Bar Divar*)

Director: Bijan Anquetil, Paul Costes
Date: 2007
Running time: 64 min
Country: France
Contact: bijanquetil@hotmail.com
Synopsis:
The Islamic Republic of Iran had made a mural painted in the memory of the three Dastvareh brothers martyred during the Iran-Iraq war; a fresco which, among hundreds of others in Tehran, represents these young soldiers who fell in the name of God, for their country, dying as "martyrs of Islam". Today, in their neighborhood, the legend of the "Dastvareh martyrs" still circulates - a complex mix of popular religion, state propaganda and personal memories. "The Faces on the Wall" questions the disillusion that surrounds an ideology based on the martyr's figure, the founding myth of the new Iranian regime.
Subject(s): trauma, martyrdom, popular art and popular culture.

**The Old Man and His Stone Garden** (*Pir- emard va Bagh-e Sangiash*)

Director: Parviz Kimiavi
Date: 2004
Running time: 52 min
Country: Iran
Contact: parvizkimiavi@yahoo.fr

Synopsis:
Many years ago, at dawn, in the middle of a barren desert in the province of Kerman in the southeast of Iran, a deaf and dumb shepherd witnessed the fall of a meteor a few hundred metres away from him. He approached it in awe and waited for the blazing stone to cool down. He put the heavy stone on his shoulder and dragged it near his tent in an earnest attempt…
Subject(s): spirituality, desert life.

## **The Other Side of the Burka** (*Az Pas-e Borghe*)

Director: Mehrdad Oskoui
Date: 2004
Running time: 52 min
Country: Iran
Contact: m_oskouei@hotmail.com
Synopsis:
On the southern Iranian island of Qeshm in the Persian Gulf, women wear a headscarf, but also a *burka,* a pinching mask of black bands pressing against the eyebrows and nose, and ending in a point just above the mouth. The women interviewed do not remove this outward sign of oppression, but against the strict religious rules they talk openly into the camera about their emotional problems, mental conditions and physical complaints. "We never wanted to appear before a camera, but now we do. We may wear a *burka*, but we are human beings. We breathe and live." During a special ceremony called *Zar* (which means possession), the different afflictions of the women can be treated. When there is no camera around, their only possible cry of distress is often death. So the film begins with the funeral of Samireh, who hanged herself from a fan with her shawl. "A woman is like a pair of shoes," her grieving husband says. "When one is gone, you can find another one. But what am I supposed to do with the children?" Both men and women make lasting statements in the film, just as filmmaker Mehrdad Oskoui does by filming shots of the daily, barren life on the island, which is plagued by droughts and other catastrophes.
Subject(s): gender issues.

## The Refrain of Locked *Lenjs* (*Safir-e Lenjhayeh Darband*)

Director: Mehdi Omidvari
Date: 2005
Running time: 38 min
Country: Iran
Contact: Omidvari.M@gmail.com
Synopsis:
A dreamlike journey to the south of Iran is accompanied by the sound of the damman (*Dohol*), a traditional drum, which is an integral part of everyday culture. The damman drumbeat resonates at work, and at times both of joy and of sorrow.
Subject(s): South of Iran, fishermen's rituals, *Zar* rituals, ethnomusicology.

## The Zero-degree Orbit (*Madar-e Sefrdarajeh*)

Director: Mahmoud Rahmani
Date: 2007
Running time: 26 min
Country: Iran
Contact: cinema_rahmani@yahoo.com
Synopsis:
A documentary film about an Iranian family who live on the frontiers between Iran and Iraq. The father is accused of killing his wife and his daughter during the war…
Subject(s): Iran- Iraq war, trauma, death and dying, *Zar* rituals.

**The Bridge's Ballads** (*Asheghanehayeh Pol*)

Director: Mehdi Rahmani
Date: 2006
Running time: 25 mins
Country: Iran
Contact: info@mehdirahmani.ir
Synopsis:
The Khajoo bridge is built on the upper Zayanderood in Isfahan, and a traditional characteristic of the people of Isfahan is their attachment to this bridge. Since long ago and until now, the Khajoo bridge has hosted ballads at nightfall. The film is a view of this bridge and this people, a view of "the Bridge's ballads".
Subject(s): Isfahan, Khajoo Bridge, popular singers, popular culture.

**Where is Leili?** (*Leili Kojast*)

Director: Mohammad Shirvani
Date: 2006
Running time: 73 min
Country: Iran
Contact: info@royabeen-media.com
Synopsis:
A journey into the ethnic and folk music of Iran with Mohammad Reza Darvishi's ideas and theory.
Subject(s): Iranian folk music, history of Iranian folk music, ethnomusicology.

## Exhibition: Kaveh Golestan—Recording the truth in Iran

Kaveh Golestan was the photojournalist with the longest continuous presence in Iran from before the Revolution until his death in 2003. This retrospective exhibition of his stark black and white photography covers the period from 1975 to the late 1990s, beginning with his iconic social realism of Tehran's disenfranchised. Golestan was an eyewitness to the Iranian Revolution and his photographs not only capture the major political upheavals that radically changed his country into an Islamic Republic; they are an intimate portrayal of a people and society in rapid transition. His photographs of Ayatollah Khomeini's arrival in 1979 and his riotous funeral a decade later were published in magazines and newspapers around the world. As Carlos Guarita wrote in Golestan's obituary published in the *Independent* newspaper, wars came to Golestan's door. He has an unrivalled body of work concerning conflict and war, including the Iran-Iraq War, uprisings in Kurdistan and both Gulf wars. He documented the immediate aftermath of Saddam Hussein's chemical attack on Halabja in Kurdistan in 1988. Being so close to death made him celebrate life and his photographs champion the power of ordinary people in the unique spiritual and cultural heritage of his country. Photography brought Golestan worldwide acclaim. In 1979 he received a Robert Capa Award. However due to the political climate in Iran, it was a prize he collected only thirteen years later. A regular contributor to *Time* magazine, he became a noted documentary filmmaker. In 1991 he released the acclaimed film *Recording the Truth*, about the situation of journalists in Iran. He lectured at the Art College at the University of Tehran, where he ended up inspiring a generation of Iranian fine photographic artists and photojournalists who have gone on to international recognition. During this period he

continued a life-long project, photographing the city's dispossessed - this time an asylum for mentally ill children, a challenging exposé that was published by the *Observer*. By 1999 he joined the BBC's Tehran bureau as a cameraman. On 2 April 2003 on assignment, covering war in the way he always did - close up and without fear - he stepped on a landmine and died in Kifri in northern Iraq. He was 52 years old.

The exhibition catalogue *Kaveh Golestan 1950-2003: Recording the Truth in Iran* (Malu Halasa and Hengameh Golestan, eds.) contains all the images in the exhibition plus additional works by Golestan. It is published by Hatje Cantz, Munich, and the Prince Claus Fund Library, The Hague.

Visual Representations of Iran

The Royal Anthropological Institute International Video Sales List:

# Titles on IRAN

RAI

**DISTRIBUTED BY THE RAI**

**DIVORCE IRANIAN STYLE**
colour, 80 minutes, 1998
Kim Longinotto & Ziba Mir-Hosseini
This film follows three ordinary women who come to the Family Law Courts in central Tehran court in order to try and transform their lives.

**RUNAWAY**
colour, 87 minutes, 2001
Kim Longinotto & Ziba Mir-Hosseini
This film is set in a refuge for girls in Tehran and follows the stories of five girls. It explores their experience of male authority, their longing for respect and freedom, and their hopes for a brighter future.

**ROYA AND OMID**
DVD/Pal, Colour | 2006 | 17 mins
Elhum Shakerifar
This film follows 22 year old Bardia, a female-to-male transsexual, now living in America, who war previously known as Roya, when he was a girl, and as Omid, when he dressed up as a boy.

**DERVISHES OF KURDHISTAN**
52 minutes Colour 1973
Brian Moser, Ali Bulookbashi and André Singer
A community of Kurds resident in Iran on the border with Iraq forms the subject of this film. Many are refugees from Kurdish areas of Iraq. They are Qadiri Dervishes, followers of an ecstatic mystical cult of Islam.

Information:
film@therai.org.uk
http://www.therai.org.uk

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IVE
INSTITUTE FOR
VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

# IVE Institute for Visual Ethnography

The newly founded institute is a media service provider for filmmakers and scientists in the broad filed of culture studies. It also distributes culture documentations on DVD through an online distribution platform.

**Who we are?**
We are a group of scientists that use visual media in research, education, and for communication.

**What we do?**
We consult scientists, teachers, and filmmakers in

- media production (pre-production, recording, post-production, subtitling, DVD production)
- distribution (web-shop, promotion, networking)
- education (summer schools, workshops) on film use as research method, analysis and documentation of field recordings and editing
- we support events and workshops that focus on film and Visual Ethnography (editorial staff, website management, organization, marketing, screening)

**Who are our clients?**
Our services address scientists, students, teachers, and people who use film for their work.

As a publisher, we are inviting film authors and scientists to contact us about publishing their films at our institute.

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# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

## Dr Michael Abecassis

**Senior lecturer, Wadham College, Oxford University, U.K**

Born in France, Michaël Abecassis graduated from the University of St-Andrews. He is a Senior Instructor and a college lecturer at the University of Oxford. He has published widely on French linguistics and cinema and is actually researching on language and symbols of war in Iranian cinema.

## Prof Ali Behdad

**Chair of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of California, U.S.A.**

A. Behdad is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA. He has published widely on issues of travel, immigration, Orientalism, and Postcolonialism. Currently, he is working on a book, Contact Visions: "On Photography and Modernity in the Middle East", which explores the ways in which the Middle East has been represented in photographs by Europeans who travelled to the region during a critical period in the development of photography. In addition to his scholarly undertakings, he has served on the editorial and advisory boards of many journals, the MLA Division on Anthropological Approaches to Literature (2000-2004).

## Prof William O. Beeman

**Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota. U.S.A.**

W. O. Beeman is Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota. He formerly taught at Brown University for more than 30 years where he was Professor of Anthropology; Theatre, Speech and Dance; and Director of Middle East Studies. He is President of the Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Association. A linguistic anthropologist, he specializes in discourse analysis and performance studies including political discourse. His research has centered on the Middle East, particularly Iran; Japan, South Asia and Europe, where he performed as an opera singer in Germany. Among his publications are *Language, Status and Power in Iran; Culture, Performance and Communication in Iran; The "Great Satan"vs. the "Mad Mullas": How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other; and The Third Line: The Opera Performer as Interpreter,* which he wrote with opera stage director, Daniel Helfgot.

## Dr Gay Breyley

**Monash University**

Gay Breyley is Faculty of Arts Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Music-Conservatorium at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Her research project focuses on musical subcultures in Iran and among Persian-speakers in Australia. Since 2003 she has conducted extensive fieldwork in rural and urban Iran, as well as in Australia's Iranian migrant communities. Recent publications include articles in Life Writing , Ethnomusicology Forum, The Journal of Australian Studies, Borderlands and Altitude.

## Prof Peter I. Crawford

**Visual Cultural Studies, University of Tromsø, Norway**

P. I. Crawford has been an active member of the board of the Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) since the late 1970s. He has written extensively on visual anthropology and ethnographic film-making. He is a former lecturer of the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology (University of Manchester) and has wide experience in teaching the subject both theoretically and practically. He is currently Associate Professor II at the Visual Anthropology Programme at the University of Tromsø, Norway. His publishing company, Intervention Press, has published numerous books on anthropology and visual anthropology, the most recent being *Reflecting Visual Ethnography* (2006, edited together with Metje Postma).

## Ms Ingvild Flaskerud

**Centre for Peace Studies, University of Tromsø, Norway**

She studies contemporary Shi'i popular iconography in Iran, focusing on the visual representation of holy personage and sacred narrative, its reception, and the function of images in ritual contexts, including the role of material culture and aesthetics in ritual performance. She has also published on Iranian Shi'i women as ritual performers, and in 2003 she produced an ethnographic film called "Standard bearers of Hussein: Women commemorating Karbala". The film can be viewed as "window" into women's religious lives in todays Iran, but may also invite discussions on ethnographic re-presentation.

## Prof M.R. Ghanoonparvar

**Professor of Persian and Comparative Literature , University of Texas at Austin, U.S.A.**

M. R. Ghanoonparvar is Professor of Persian and Comparative Literature and Persian Language at the University of Texas at Austin.

He has published widely on Persian literature and culture in both English and Persian and is the author of Prophets of Doom: Literature as a Socio-Political Phenomenon in Modern Iran (1984), In a Persian Mirror: Images of the West and Westerners in Iranian Fiction (1993), Translating the Garden (2001), Reading Chubak (2005), and Persian Cuisine: Traditional, Regional and Modern Foods (2006).

## Prof Shahla Haeri

### Director of Women's Studies Program, Boston University, U.S.A.

S. Haeri is director of Women's Studies Program and an Associate Professor of cultural Anthropology at Boston University. Trained as a Cultural Anthropologist with specific focus on law and religion, Haeri has conducted cross-cultural ethnographic research in Iran, Pakistan, and India, and minimally in Uzbekistan and Turkey. Her ongoing intellectual and academic interests converge on the evolving yet contentious relationship between religion/law, gender, and the state in the Muslim world in general, and in Iran since revolution of 1979 in particular. She is the author of Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage, Mut'a, in Iran (1989, 2006 4th pt.), and No Shame for the Sun: Lives of Professional Pakistani women (2002/2004).

Dr. Haeri made a short video documentary (46 min.) entitled, *Mrs. President: Women and Political Leadership in Iran* (2002), focusing on six women presidential contenders in Iran. Going against the grain, "Mrs. President" addresses the anomaly of under representation or "invisibility" of professional, educated, middle or upper middle class Muslim women in the media and in the growing literature on women from the Muslim world.

## Dr Rolf Husmann

### Chairman of Commission on Visual Anthropology (CVA) of the International Union of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, The Institute for Knowledge and Media, Goettingen, Germany

Born 1950, anthropologist-filmmaker and currently Chairman of the Commission on Visual Anthropology (CVA) of the International Union of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. Educated in anthropology and Islamic Studies at Göttingen and London (SOAS) he received a PhD from Göttingen university in 1984 (on the history of the Nuba in the Sudan). Teaching since at different universities in Germany and abroad, and working as an academic staff member at the IWF Knowledge and Media Göttingen, Germany, his special fields of intererest include Visual Anthropology and the Anthropology of Sport. He has made several films, including "Nuba Wrestling", "Firth

on Firth" and "Destination Samoa - New Zealand Samoans Between Two Cultures". His current work includes the making of a film about the life and work of Asen Balikci, founder of the Commission on Visual Anthropology.

## Ms Maryam Kashani

### Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology, The University of Texas at Austin/ documentary filmmaker, U.S.A.

M. Kashani was born and raised in San Francisco to a Japanese mother and Iranian father. Coming from a music background, she began filmmaking as an undergraduate at UC Berkeley. She received her MFA in Film and Video from the California Institute of the Arts in 2003. Her films and videos have been presented at international museums and film festivals. She is currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Texas, Austin, focussing on the Middle East Diaspora, Islamic Studies, and ethnographic filmmaking.

## Mr Ahmad Kiarostami

### Independent researcher, U.S.A.

A. Kiarostami has studied Math and Computer Science at Sharif University in Iran, and Philosophy at UCLA. He has worked in cinema and software industries for more than fifteen years. He founded three companies including the first multimedia and online production venue in Iran, where he published award-winning multimedia products in cinema and visual arts. His project, Persopedia.com, is the biggest digital library of Iranian poetry on Internet. Ahmad has worked on film projects with several Iranian directors including Bahram Beyzaie, Naser Taghvaee, and Ramin Bahrani. He has initiated and contributed to numerous film, cultural, and technical endeavors, including national computer standard committees in Iran, the Iranian National Graphics Society, the San Francisco International Film Festival, and San Francisco Cinematheque. His music video "Eshgh-e Sor'at", was amongst the most viewed Music Videos online.

## Dr Michelle Langford

### School of English, Media & Performing Arts, The University of New South Wales, Australia

M. Langford holds a PhD in Film Studies from the University of Sydney. She is a lecturer in Film Studies in the School of English, Media and Performing Arts at the University of New South Wales where she is currently conducting research into the allegorical dimensions of Iranian cinema. She has published on both German and Iranian cinema and in 2005 she co-convened a 1 day symposium on Iranian cinema entitled Imagining Iran at the University of New South Wales in Australia.

**Dr Mazyar Lotfalian**
**Centre for Cultural Studies, University of California, U.S.A.**

M. Lotfalian is a resident fellow for 2006-2007 at the Center for Cultural Studies, UC-Santa Cruz and Visiting Assistant Professor at the Global Studies Program at University of Pittsburgh (Spring 08). An anthropologist trained at Rice University, Lotfalian has taught most recently at Yale University. His work explores notions of subjectivity and mediation among Muslims in the context of the transnational resurgence of Islam. His 2004 book, *Islam, Technoscientific Identities, and the Culture of Curiosity* (University Press of America), focused on the contemporary intellectual undertaking of Muslims to rethink how science and technology are practiced in the Islamic world. His current ethnographic work turns to the consideration of artistic productions of transnational Muslim artists. He is interested in relationship between aesthetics and politics in the transnational context.

**Dr Pardis Mahdavi**
**Department of Anthropology, Pomona College, U.S.A.**

P. Mahdavi has recently joined Pomona College as Assistant Professor of anthropology after pursuing her doctorate at Columbia University in the departments of Sociomedical Sciences and Anthropology. Her research interests include sexuality, human rights, transnational feminism and public health in the context of changing global and political structures. Her dissertation project is now being published as a book entitled "Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution" with Stanford Press. Dr Pardis Mahdavi teaches courses on Medical Anthropology, Sociocultural Anthropology, Ethnographic Methods and has designed a new course entitled "Sexual Politics of the Middle East". She has published in the Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Cultures, Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World Review, Culture, Health and Sexuality, Anthropology News. Pardis has received outstanding research awards from the American Public Health Association, the Society for Medical Anthropology and the Society for Applied Anthropology. She is currently an editor for Rahavard Quarterly, a journal devoted to contemporary social issues in Iran and amongst the Iranian diaspora.

**Ms Amy Malek**
**University of California, U.S.A.**

Amy Malek is a graduate student in Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She received her M.A. from New York University in the Program for Near Eastern Studies and her B.A. in International Studies and Middle Eastern Studies from

Emory University. Ms. Malek is particularly interested in visual culture, media, and the negotiation of diasporic identity through cultural production in Iran and the Iranian diaspora. Her Master's thesis, published in *Iranian Studies* in 2006, focused on Iranian exile cultural production with a particular focus on Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* graphic novel series, arguing that the author's liminality enabled her to produce a successful site for identity negotiation, self-reflection, and cultural translation.

## Prof Hamid Naficy

**Professor of Communication, Department of Radio, TV, Film, Northwestern University, U.S.A.**

H. Naficy is John Evans Professor of Communication, teaching film and media studies courses in the Department of Radio, Television, and Film at Northwestern University. His areas of research and teaching include documentary and ethnographic films; cultural studies of Diaspora, exile, and postcolonial cinemas and media; and Iranian and Middle Eastern cinemas. He has published extensively on these and allied topics. His English language books are: An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking (Princeton University Press), Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place (edited, Routledge), The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles (University of Minnesota Press), Otherness and the Media: the Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged (co-edited, Harwood Academic), and Iran Media Index (Greenwood Press). His forthcoming work is the multi-volume book Cinema, Modernity, and National Identity: A Social History of a Century of Iranian Cinema (Duke University Press). He has also published extensively in Persian, including a two-volume book on the documentary cinema theory and history, Film-e Mostanad (Daneshgah-e Azad-e Iran Press). He has lectured widely internationally and his works have been cited and reprinted extensively and translated into many languages, including French, German, Turkish, Italian, and Persian.

## Dr Kamran Rastegar

**Lecturer in Persian and Arabic, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, U.K.**

K. Rastegar is lecturer in Arabic and Persian at the University of Edinburgh, where he teaches comparative cultural and literary histories of the modern Middle East. He also researches on topics relating to contemporary cinemas of Iran and the Arab world. His recent publications include: "The Naïve Perspective in Women's War Narratives: *The Eye of the Mirror* and *Cracking India,*" in *The Journal of Middle Eastern Women's Studies.* A monograph, *Literary Modernity Between Europe and the Middle East* was published in 2007 by Routledge.

## Mrs Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri

**New York University, U.S.A.**

P. Sadegh-Vaziri is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, born and raised in Tehran, Iran. She came to the US for her studies, and received her BA degree from Trinity College in Hartford, Ct., and MA in Cinema Studies from New York University. She has worked as producer for Link TV on a series to promote peace with Iran; for Deep Dish TV on a series about the war in Iraq, for Trinity Television on documentaries about 9/11 and for Internews Network, on programs that promote dialogue between societies in conflict. She also teaches film studies at New York University, McGhee Division. Her personal documentaries about Iran have been broadcast on PBS, and Link TV and shown widely in museums, art houses and universities around the world.

## Mr Hamidreza Sadr

**Writer, film historian, Iran**

H. R. Sadr born in 1956 in Masshad, Iran. He hold a B.A from the Faculty of Economics, Tehran University, and M.A in Urban Planning from the Faculty of Arts, Tehran University. He is writing about movies as a film critic since 1981 in the following magazines: Zan-e Rooz, Soroush, Film, Film International, and Haft. He has worked with the National Film Theatre (London) & London Film Festival in the selection of Iranian Films.

## Ms Elhum Shakerifar

**Visual anthropologist and Independent documentary filmmaker, U.K.**

E. Shakerifar grew up in France and in the UK. She completed her undergraduate degree in Persian and Islamic Studies at Oxford in 2004, after which she studied Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research so far has mostly dealt with the status and rights of social marginalities -- ranging from gender issues in Islamic cultures (particularly temporary marriage and transsexuality) to portrayals of mental and physical disability in contemporary Western societies. She has long been active in various charitable organizations working essentially in projects of photography and filmmaking. “Roya and Omid” is one of Elhum’s first films about the social and legal realities faced by transsexuals from Iranian backgrounds.

**Dr Faegheh Shirazi**
**Department of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, U.S.A.**

One of her primary areas of interest is the subject of material culture and its influence on gender identity and discourse in Muslim societies. Textiles and Clothing, particularly the Islamic veil (Hijab), is the main focus of her research. She also studies issues of women, rituals, and rites of passage as they relate to material culture and gender in popular Islamic societies. She has authored numerous articles in national and international scholarly journals and is the author of The Veil Unveiled: Hijab in Popular Culture. University Press of Florida, 2001 & 2003. Her next book Velvet Jihad: Muslim Women's Quiet Resistance to Islamic Fundamentalism. University Press of Florida will be published in 2008.

**Prof Sussan Siavochi**
**Chair, Department of Political Science, Trinity University, U.S.A.**

S. Siavochi was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. She completed her Ph.D. program in political science at Ohio State University. Prof. S. Siavochi is the author of "Liberal Nationalism in Iran: The Failure of a Movement". Most of her works has been focused on contemporary Iranian polity including her article "Cultural Policies of the Islamic Republic: Cinema and Book Publications" published by International Journal of Middle East Studies.

**Prof Annabelle Sreberny**
**Director of the Centre for Media and Film Studies, SOAS, University of London, U.K.**

Annabelle Sreberny is Professor and Director of the Centre for Media and Film Studies at SOAS, University of London. She has been researching and writing about Iran since before the revolution and her book "Small Media, Big Revolution" (W. A. Mohammadi) appears on Amazon's best-seller list of books on Iran. She is currently working on a book about Iranian blogging (W. G.Khiabany) for IBTauris. SOAS recently held a conference on The Cinema of Rakshan Bani-Etemad, supported by a retrospective of her films at the BFI; Bani-Etemad ran a master class for film-makers and will be awarded an honorary degree by SOAS in July.

## Mr Mohammad Tahaminejad

**Writer, film historian, Iran**

He was born in 1942 at the occupied Tehran and graduated from the vocational journalism school, Television training center, and arts complex university in film making. He has translated and authored some theoretical and research books and articles about the cinema and the modes of new documentary films, among them: script of Iranian cinema (best book of the year–1995), The Iranian cinema of dreams and phantasm. Iranian documentary cinema, the field of differences and have taught in university. He is one of the members of board of founder of the Iranian documentary film makers' society and once its director.

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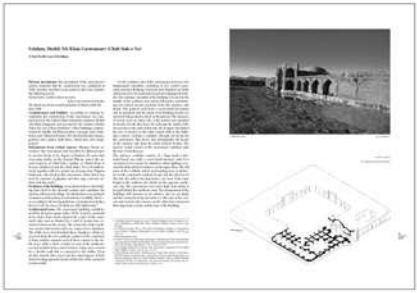
Ta'ziyeh – passion play – is the traditional Persian theatrical genre in which the drama is conveyed wholly or predominantly through music and singing. Photographs from the late 19th century dedicated to ta'ziyeh along with the articles of the most prominent authorities on the subject are published for the first time in this exquisite album. It is designed by the most prominent Iranian graphic artist, laureate of 2007 Prince Claus Award, Reza Abedini.



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**Travel Guides to Iran**

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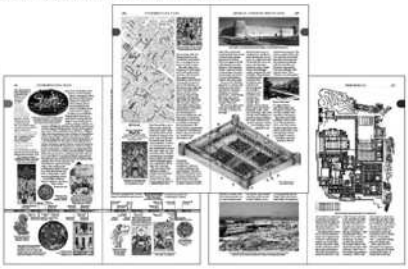
The history of Esfahan dates back to the remotest antiquity, but its heyday coincides with the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, when it was chosen as the capital of the Safavid state. The current guide goes beyond the limits of the city itself, to cover most of the historical sites in the Esfahan region, with particular emphasis on Kashan. There are 567 photographs, 14 historical maps, 12 three-dimensional paintings, 11 building plans, and 2 complete maps to Esfahan and Kashan.

**Travel Guide to Fars**
Fars is often called the cradle of Iranian civilization. In different times, it was the seat of three powerful dynasties – the Achaemenians, Sasanians, and Zands, ruling from Pasargadae, Persepolis, Estakhr, and finally Shiraz. Fars (Pars) is the same word as the Greek Persis. Originally the title of only a section of Iran, it has begotten the name which Europeans applied to the whole country until the early 20th century. There are 970 photographs; 47 maps; 53 paintings, including 11 three-dimensional paintings; 53 building plans; and a complete map to Shiraz.



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IWF Media and Knowledge collects, archives, documents and distributes audio-visual media of academic and scientific relevance such as documentaries, research documents or visualisations. These media may be recently produced or older material inaccessibly stored in archives.

## Media on Iran

After 13 Years - Back in Iran: The filmmaker Abbas Yousefpour returns to Iran and his family and friends after 13 years of life in Europe. His experiences and impressions from a trip to different places in Iran during the New Year festivities are described in the film.

My Uncle, the Patriarch: Portrait of the filmmaker's uncle, the patriarch Haj Taghi, an old bazaar shoe merchant. After a car accident he had to hand over business to his sons. They talk about the economic and family problems, many of them resulting from the changes from traditional to modern values in contemporary Iranian society.

Fredrik Barth - From Fieldwork to Theory: Barth carried out fieldwork in the Sudan, in Iran, Oman, Pakistan, New Guinea, Bali and Bhutan. In the film, he talks on his personal life and academic career, the importance of his fieldwork for his theoretical findings, and many other topics of interest for anthropologists.

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In recent years there has been a steady growth in, and global recognition of, the innovative qualities of Iranian cinema and visual arts. Yet, at the same time, Iran occupies an ambiguous place in the imagination of the West. As a field of academic inquiry, visual anthropology opens up a range of possibilities for examining the ambiguities that surround the imaginations and representations of Iran. Drawing from the broad spectrum of theoretical approaches that span the poetics and practice of filmmaking and photography as well as the art and politics of representation, visual anthropology poses a series of questions that may be the basis for dialogue and debate over images of Iran between scholars from a variety of disciplines. Our four-day programme will investigate these issues within the context of a conference, a film season and a photographic exhibition.

The conference will gather together anthropologists, ethnographers and film-makers from Iran and elsewhere who are interested in the visual representation of Iran. It aims to bring these experts into dialogue to interpret and theorise such representation.

Incorporating both Iranian and non-Iranian visualisations, the goal of the film season is to explore anthropologically the wide range of visual representations of Iran. This does not exclude, of course, the particular genre of ethnographic documentary, but the aim is rather to incorporate it as an object of analysis within a wider understanding of visual anthropology.

The photographic exhibition *Recording the Truth in Iran* consists of the photos of Kaveh Golestan (1950 - 2003) on the subjects of the Islamic revolution of Iran (1978) and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88).

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